

cloak, nor on an unaccustomed pillow rest,
groping for
dreams till dawn?'—'Genji tended to fall in
love with
those that gave him least encouragement.
The ideal
condition for the continuance of his affection
was that the
beloved, much occupied elsewhere, should
grant him
no more than an occasional favour.'—'And
yet I know
that even at this moment the sight of
something very
beautiful, were it only some common
flower or tree,
might in an instant make life again seem foil
of meaning
and reality/ The only novelty lies in the
special value
Proust attaches to his mystical moments of
spontaneous
recollection; and in the close analogy he
draws between
these and the vision of the artist. No one, so
far as I know,
has suggested this before; though
Wordsworth and others
have groped round it, they did not
distinguish between the
two kinds of memory. Yet the suggestion
that such
moments of recollection are somehow a
triumph over
time, an escape from transience, is surely
more a figure of
speech than a reality; due, it may be, to
some psycho-
logical peculiarity which gave such
moments for Proust
the abnormal intensity of the mystic's
communion with
the Absolute. But even with him such
moments passed
and Time claimed his thrall again. Proust's
was a very
Pyrrhic victory. This 'Quest of Vanished
Time', in a word,
seems to me valuable for quite other
qualities than its
view of life. Ironically enough, had Proust

understood
himself better, he might have been less
obsessed with the
duty of self-understanding. For his
philosophy, as so
often, seems largely explicable by the
physical and psycho-
logical peculiarities of the philosopher.
Dominated in
early years by his mother, he seems to have
become one
of those who cannot in maturity combine
affection and
desire for any woman. Again, partly no
doubt as an
invalid, he gives also the impression of an
inordinate